

REMARKS

The Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claims 55-70 are allowed and that claims 24, 27-30, and 48-54 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-7, 9-11, 17-19, 21-23, 31-37 and 42-46 as anticipated by Andrieu U.S. Patent No. 5,300,337, and rejected claims 8, 12-16, 20, 25, 26, 38-41 and 47 as obvious over Andrieu in view of either Renaud U.S. Patent No. 6,066,802 or Lowe U.S. Patent No. 4,668,545. The Applicants respectfully disagree because Andrieu does not disclose each element of the invention of claims 1 and 32. Specifically with respect to claim 1, Andrieu does not teach a sleeve having layers joined along an edge by a knit stitch formed by interlooping of successive traverses of fill yarns to form a sleeve. In contrast, Andrieu teaches a flat sheet having a flexible tape along one edge with hook-like elements that project from the tape's surface to engage multi-filament yarns exposed along an opposite edge of the sheet. In this way, the tape is releasable to selectively wrap the sheet around objects.

With respect to independent claim 32, Andrieu fails to teach or even suggest a sleeve having opposing sidewall portions in facing relation with one another to assume a substantially flat configuration, the opposing sidewall portions being separable into spaced-apart relation to receive an elongated item. The sidewall taught in Andrieu is a single flat sheet and is not in facing relation with any other sidewall portion nor separable from any sidewall portion to receive elongated items.

Consequently, claims 1 and 32 are believed to be allowable, and reconsideration of the Examiner's rejection is respectfully requested. Since the Andrieu patent forms the basis for the obviousness rejections of the remaining claims, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections for the reasons stated above.

The Applicants have added new claim 71, which depends from claim 55 and should, therefore, be allowable. This claim generally relates to the fact that in some embodiments of the invention, the attachment device extends along at least one edge of the sleeves.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicants believe that claims 1-71 are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests Notice of the same. If any issues remain, however, a telephone call to the undersigned attorney would be greatly appreciated.

The fee of \$25.00 for the new dependent claim is enclosed herewith. In the event this fee is not sufficient, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 18-0987.

If any further issues remain after this amendment, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,



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